

TIGTA Approving Official's FAQs

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What is my responsibility as an approving official?

It is the approving official's responsibility to verify expenses/receipts, acknowledge that the expenses are reasonable/necessary and ensure that adequate funds are available.



Who is responsible for the validity of the travel claim?

The approving official assumes ultimate responsibility under [31 U.S.C. 3528](#) for the validity of the claim; however:

The traveler must ensure all travel expenses are prudent and necessary and submit the expenses in the form of a proper claim;

The authorizing/approving official shall review the completed claim to ensure that the claim is properly prepared in accordance with regulations and agency procedures prior to authorizing it for payment. Electronic or imaged copies of receipts for authorized transportation, lodging, and any authorized, single expense over \$75 must be attached to the voucher prior to approval.



As an approving official, when should I authorize travel?

When the travel is essential to the mission of your agency. An approving official authorizes travel for employees in advance of travel.



How long should receipts be retained?

Effective October 1, 2006, TIGTA elected to make electronic or imaged copies of travel records its official travel records, which will be retained in GovTrip for 6 years and 3 months. Employees may choose to maintain the original documents for their own records after this date. Managers or their designated representative should maintain the paper copies of travel records filed before October 1, 2006, for 6 years and 3 months. The disposition date for the paper records is December 31, 2012.



How long can a voucher remain in my review box?

The approving official should approve vouchers within 7 business days upon receipt or contact Travel Services to have document returned to traveler.



Can I approve my own documents?

No. TIGTA does not authorize its employees to self-approve documents.



Am I required to approve cancellation documents?

Yes. The approving official must stamp cancellation (amendment) documents approved in GovTrip to ensure the travel funds will be de-obligated in the accounting system.



Can travelers claim tips for waiters, porters, bellhops, or hotel housekeeping?

No. Approving officials should not approve documents that contain these tips.

They are included in per diem (incidentals).

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Can travelers claim tips for taxi drivers? If so, how much?

Yes. An amount in which the approving official/agency determines to be reasonable.

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Which method of transportation should I authorize?

Approving officials must authorize the method of transportation resulting in the greatest advantage to the Government - not on the basis of traveler preference or minor inconvenience to the traveler.

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Can the traveler select a non-contract carrier?

Yes. In certain circumstances (see below), the approving official should verify that justification has been entered in the comment section of the voucher when a non-contract carrier has been used.

- Seating space is unavailable for the scheduled service of the awardee air carrier or the scheduled service would require the traveler to incur overnight lodging expense;
- The contract's flight schedule is inconsistent with the Government's policy of scheduling travel during normal working hours to the maximum extent practicable; or,
- A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government or other mandatory user. This determination is based upon a cost comparison to include the combined cost of transportation, lodging, meals and related expenses. **Discount fares restricted to Government employees only cannot be used.**
- **The agency's Travel Management Center (American Express) must be used to make travel arrangements with a non-contract carrier.**

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Does the mode of transportation have to be included in the voucher?

Yes. The mode of transportation is required (i.e., POV, GOV, passenger, etc.). The approving official should verify that the mode of transportation has been included in the voucher in GovTrip.



Can travelers claim 'actuals' or excess of per diem for lodging?

Yes. The approval official will approve actual expenses on a case-by-case basis prior to travel. The completion of the SF-1321, *Authorization for Official Travel*, must be approved by either the Function Head or his/her delegated official prior to travel.

If the traveler was charged in excess of per diem, 'actuals' for lodging must be selected in GovTrip. Approving officials must verify that the document contains a comment justifying 'actuals' prior to approving the voucher.



Can travelers claim Special expenses?

Yes. However, the approving official must approve the expense and verify a comment has been entered in the document explaining the specific use of the funds.



How much can a traveler be reimbursed for phone expenses?

There is no automatic entitlement for **personal** phone expenses. Travelers must incur the cost in order to be approved. For agencies who have adopted the ARC travel policy guide, the maximum per day is \$10.00 domestic and \$20.00 foreign; however, **the traveler must incur the expense and not automatically be reimbursed the maximum amount per day for personal phone expenses.** Although no limit is placed on the number, duration, or cost of **business**-related telephone calls that the traveler may place, the approving official should closely monitor such telephone usage. **NOTE: Travelers should obtain and use a Government-issued phone card.**



If I am listed in the office routing list, what is my responsibility?

To pre-audit authorizations/vouchers, review any audit fails, and stamp the documents electronically.



When should comments be included in the Comments section of a document?

When,

- Special expenses exist
 - Travel situations not covered by TIGTA's limited open travel authorization
 - and individual authorizations
- Use of a non-contract carrier
- Travel dates change
- TDY location changes
- Mode of transportation changes
- Any other unusual circumstances



Is a traveler entitled to overtime when traveling outside of his/her duty hours?

Approving officials normally do not require travelers to travel outside their regular duty hours, including Federal Government holidays and weekends. When a traveler must travel outside regular duty hours, the approving official must determine if overtime compensation is applicable, and approve and submit such payment for processing. Contact the agency human resources office for guidance concerning overtime entitlements.



How must travelers arrange travel?

You must arrange your travel through your agency's existing Travel Management Center (TMC), American Express (AMEX). Travel arrangements/reservations should not be made using Hotels.com, Orbitz.com, Travelocity.com, etc.



Must travelers use the e-Gov Travel Service to arrange travel?

Yes. You must use the e-Gov Travel Service (GovTrip) and/or AMEX. The Federal Travel Regulations require Federal employees to use their agency's existing TMC.



May I approve additional travel expenses for employees with special needs or a disability?

Yes. Approving officials are responsible for making decisions in good faith as to whether a requested documentation will be provided. You may approve additional travel expenses for

- Transportation and per diem expenses incurred by a family member or other attendant who must travel with the employee to make the trip possible;
- Specialized transportation to, from, and/or at the TDY duty location;
- Costs for handling baggage that are a direct result of the employee's special need;
- Renting and/or transporting a wheelchair; and
- Premium-class accommodations when necessary to accommodate the employee's special need.